

# Wargaming 21<sup>st</sup> Century Conflict



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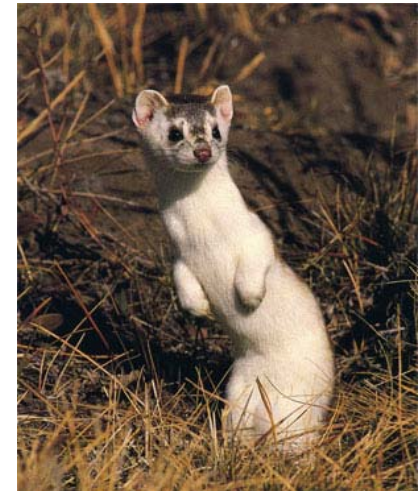
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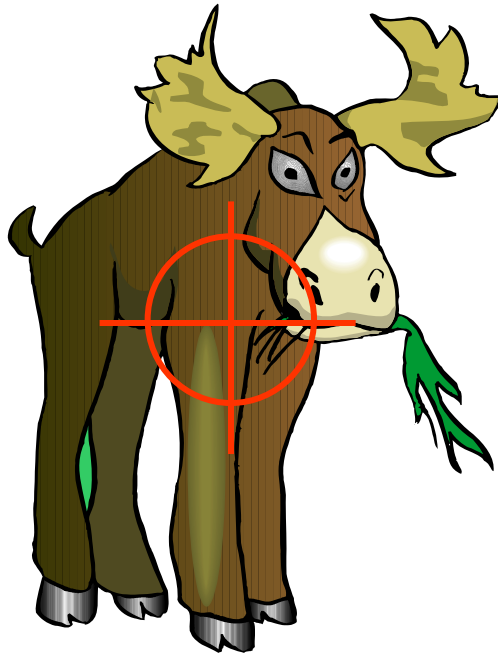


*Weasel*

# What do I mean by “game?”



**game (n.); animals hunted for food or sport**



# What do I mean by “21<sup>st</sup> Century Conflict?”

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## FOURTH GENERATION WAR

**OOTW**

**Post-conventional War**

**L o n g      W a r**

**Counter-  
insurgency**

**Assymmetric  
Conflict**

**3 Block War**

**Global War on ~~Islamic Terrorism~~**

**LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT**


**~~Violent Extremism~~**

**Unrestricted War**

**~~Evildoers~~**

# Game plan



- What wargames are good at 
- The limits of wargaming
- Breaking the rules
- What now?

# Essence of wargames



- People . . .
- . . . making decisions, in a context of . . .
- competition or conflict (with other people, or nature)





# Force on Force



- Two-sided conflict
- Clear territorial objectives
- Attrition combat model
- Fixed start point and end states
- Meaningful “victory” and “defeat”




***None of These Represent 21<sup>st</sup> Century Conflict!***



# Game plan



- What wargames are good at
- **The limits of wargaming** 
- Breaking the rules
- What now?

# High stakes



“War is a matter of vital importance to the state; the province of life or death; the road to survival or ruin.”

孫子 Sun Tzu

Cardboard doesn't bleed. No decisions you make in any wargame are likely to cause death or permanent harm to yourself, your friends or your loved ones...

# 4 Assymetries

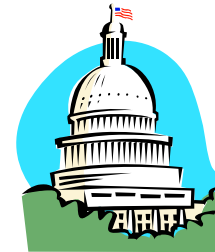
- **Worldview**

- You have Wikipedia & GoogleEarth
- We have the Holy Qu'ran



- **Purpose**

- You want stability & democracy
- We want Justice under the Caliphate



- **Means**

- You have brigades, air wings & battlegroups
- We have AK-47s & suicide vests




- **Actions**

- You have CONPLAN's, OPLAN's & ATO's
- We have stories about heroes and martyrs



# Game plan

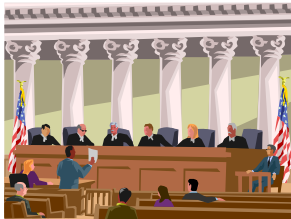


- What wargames are good at
- The limits of wargaming
- **Breaking the rules** 
- What now?

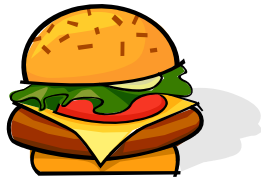
# What to unlearn



- **Game Balance**
  - Life isn't fair. Get over it.



- **Rule-based Behavior**
  - “Art is anything you can get away with” – Warhol




- **Consistency**
  - When the men on the chessboard get up and tell you where to go, then you're beginning to understand 21<sup>st</sup> Century conflict.



- **Convenient Duration**
  - Can you really wargame protracted war in an afternoon?
  - It was a bitch to design, shouldn't it be a bitch to play?

# Game plan



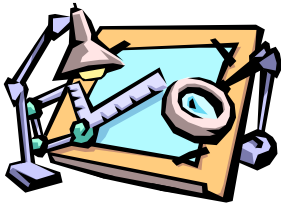
- What wargames are good at
- The limits of wargaming
- Breaking the rules
- **What now?** 

# 3 Design approaches

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- *Artist*: immerse players in a story that they become part of, using moderated, high-engagement games



- *Architect*: focus on distilling a simplified decision-making environment, using a mix of mechanics from many gaming traditions



- *Analyst*: focus on modeling the real world, including the players as elements of the model, using classic wargaming methods.



# What you left out of your game



- “Lawfare”
- Refugees, Genocide, “Ethnic cleansing”
- Collateral damage & Atrocities
- NGO’s & Media in the battlespace
- Neutral traffic; “Blue on Blue”
- Prisoners of War, Detainees & Hostages

**These are not left out of 21<sup>st</sup> Century conflict: They dominate it!**

**Kirk:** What would you say the odds are on our getting out of here?

**Spock:** It is difficult to be precise, Captain. I should say approximately 7824.7 to one.

**Kirk:** Difficult to be precise? 7824 to one?

**Spock:** 7824.7 to one.

**Kirk:** That's a pretty close approximation.

**Spock:** I endeavor to be accurate.

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**Spock:** Your illogical approach to chess does have its advantages on occasion, Captain.

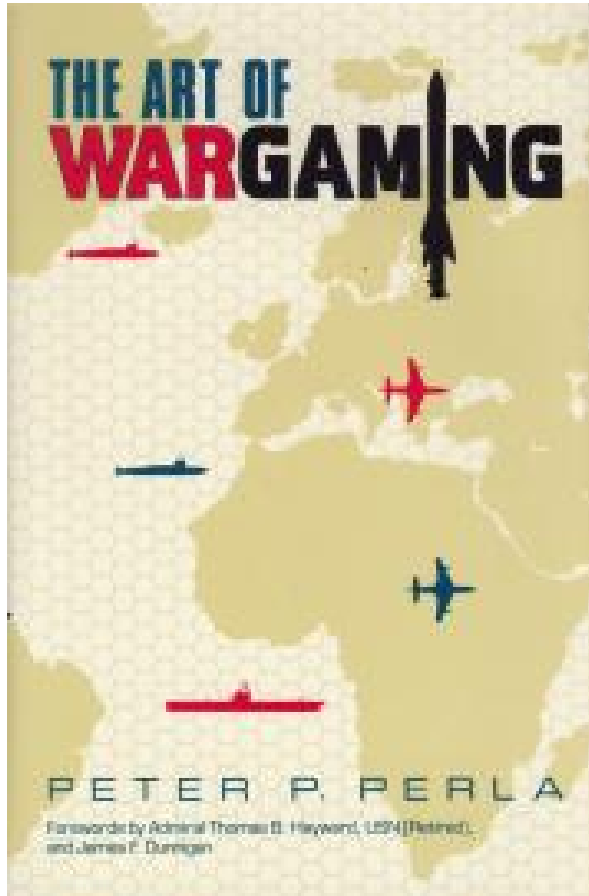
**Kirk:** I prefer to call it inspired.

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**Spock:** *Change is the essential process of all existence.*



*“I would discuss the Holy Books with the learned men seven hours every day. That would be the sweetest thing of all.”*



The Art of Wargaming : A Guide  
for Professionals and Hobbyists  
by Peter P. Perla

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1990

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